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ABSTRACT

This study, conducted in the context of a Canadian Aboriginal teacher education program, sought to determine if student teachers', cooperating teachers', and university supervisors' perceptions about the role of the university supervisor differed, particularly when this triad was composed of individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Participants consisted of aboriginal student teachers (N=29) enrolled in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) at the University of Saskatchewan (Canada) and their non-aboriginal cooperating teachers (N=41) and university supervisors (N=16): 84 in all. The "Role of the University Supervisor Survey," which assessed the perceptions of each participant with regards to the relative importance of selected roles and responsibilities of the university supervisor, was mailed to all participants. Anonymity was guaranteed. The final return rate of the surveys was 76 percent for student teachers, 85 percent for cooperating teachers, and 88 percent for university supervisors. Results indicated that university supervisors, student teachers, and cooperating teachers held similar perceptions of the university supervisor's role. Comparisons conducted in the post hoc analysis revealed a single significant difference between perceptions of student teachers and cooperating teachers: student teachers placed a lower level of priority on the role of the university supervisor to perform formative assessment procedures. Overall however, all groups generally agreed that the supervisor's most important roles were to facilitate feedback conferences; to observe and provide feedback to the student teacher; to provide moral support and encouragement; and to review time lines, requirements, and responsibilities. (Contains 23 references.) (JB)

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VIEWING THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT TEACHER SUPERVISOR THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

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Viewing the Role of the Student Teacher Supervisor

Through Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Absence of role clarity in the student teaching triad has been identified as creating confusion that frustrates the academic and practical intent of the student teaching experience (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990), and is one of the primary sources of anxiety and conflict in field experiences. Role ambiguity can cause distrust among the members of the triad (Cope, 1973), contribute to competitive versus cooperative attitudes, and may be a reason why members of the triad have been found to grow increasingly negative toward one another (Yee, 1967).

The absence of defined roles has often resulted in overlapping functions assumed by the university supervisor and cooperating teacher (Grimmett and Ratzalff, 1986; Applegate and Lasley, 1982, 1984); this has been identified as a problem inherent in student teaching (Richardson-Koehler, 1988). Since typically, the primary roles and functions of each member of the student teaching triad are implicit rather than explicitly stated (Beswick, Harmon, Elsworth, Fallon & Woock, 1980; Boothroyd, 1979; Cope, 1973; Tittle, 1974; Yates, 1981; Yee, 1967), and agreement among triad members regarding roles and responsibilities is not prevalent (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990), one researcher ventured as far to suggest that the university supervisor's effectiveness in influencing the growth of the student teacher is so insignificant that this type of supervision should be discontinued (Bowman,1979).

Open communication between triad members forms the basis for humanistic supervision and is generally seen as desirable; honesty and clear communication may be hindered however, if members of the triad have significantly different perceptions of supervisory roles. In cases where members of the triad may be of different social, cultural or ethnic backgrounds, mismatches in perceptions may be magnified. During student teaching, the existence and

communication of such divergent perspectives may create ungrounded or irrational fear that professional or personal comments made by any of the triad members towards each other may mistakenly be interpreted as being racist or culturally insensitive (Bare & Baumbardner, 1993). Research which addresses the nature and effectiveness of supervisor-supervisee relationships in specific multicultural contexts appears to be virtually nonexistent in the literature relating to preservice teacher education. However, the importance of knowledge about multicultural issues, theory, models, and the practice of multicultural supervision itself has been acknowledged as one of the two most important changes within counseling and counselor education in the past twenty years (Fong, 1994). According to a 1994 report released by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA) entitled The Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Teachers in Saswkatchewan Schools,

> Continued migration of Aboriginal people over the past decade from reserves and rural areas has dramatically boosted the Aboriginal school age populaation in the urban areas. Urban school divisions report increases in the number of Aboriginal students ranging from 25% to 200% in the last ten years. Statistics Canada projections to the year 2001 show this trend continuing with the Indian population of both Regina and Saskatoon doubling in the ten year period 1991-2001 and increasing by a third in other urban centres. (p. 37)

The report suggests that the demand for Aboriginal teachers will continue to increase rapidly, citing current employment rates for aboriginal teacher education programs to be close to 90 percent. Thus recruitment, training, and retention of new Aboriginal teachers will be a priority for the province of Saskatchewan. In the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) at the University of Saskatchewan, virtually every student teaching triad is multicultural in nature. That is, each triad is composed of an Aboriginal student teacher and at least one supervisor (cooperating teacher or university supervisor) who is non-Native. In the history of ITEP's

existence, the university supervisor in the triad has been of non-Native descent. Working and communicating in such an environment of diversity has been beneficial in preparing ITEP student teachers to work in multicultural contexts.

The Indian Teacher Education Program has recognizes the value of the university supervisor in serving an integral and critical function in the success of their graduates. Nevertheless, in a proactive approach asimed at encouraging collegiality and communication between members of the triad, ITEP was interested in how their students' perceptions about role of the university supervisor compared to university supervisors' own perceptions of their role.

Studies conducted by Enz, Freeman and McCammon (1994) and Enz, Freeman and Wallin (1994) have revealed significant differences in the perceptions of triad members with respect to the role of the university supervisor, however, the ability and suitablity of generalizing these findings to multicultural supervision contexts is unknown. The existence of commonalities between these two studies and the present study may offer insight about aspects of the university supervisor's role which may be present across multiple boundaries such as geographical location and socio-cultural context.

There is a virtual absence of research related to First Nations preservice education, however, related literature suggests that student teacher dissatisfaction with the role of the college supervisor is prevalent (Funk et al., 1982; Griffin et al., 1983), and this may interfere with the academic and practical intents of field experiences. To overcome difficulties arising from role ambiguity, it is necessary to develop the means by which role expectations can be made explicit and clearly articulated (Guyton and McIntyre,1990). However, as Knowles, Cole, and Presswood (1994) note, "Unlike the plethora of literature on the cooperating teacher, research on the role of the university supervisor in field experiences is relatively scant" (p. 197). This view is supported by our comprehensive review of the research literature in the field as well as recent

reviews conducted by others (see Enz, Freeman & McCammon, 1994 and Enz, Freeman, & Wallin, 1994).

Recent research delineating the role of the university supervisor suggests that whereas student teachers and cooperating teachers tend to view the central role/responsibilities of the university in similar ways, they nevertheless differ in their perceptions of the relative importance of certain basic functions they expect university supervisors to fulfill (Enz, Freeman & McCammon, 1994; Enz, Freeman & Wallin, 1994). Knowledge about the nature of these preferences may assist triad members in communicating their expectations and needs.

This purpose of this study, conducted within the context of an Canadian Aboriginal teacher education program, was to determine if triad members' perceptions about the role of the university supervisor differ, particularly when the triad is composed of individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Student teachers enrolled in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) at the University of Saskatchewan are of Aboriginal ancestry, while most of their cooperating teachers and all of their university supervisors (to date) have been of non-Aboriginal descent.

The study sought to answer two questions:

(1) What is the rank order of the 14 items describing roles and responsibilities of the university supervisor cited in the Role *of the University Supervisor Survey* (Lamont & Arcand, 1994) listed from most important (rank of 1) of least important (rank of 14) for each of the three groups in the triad?

(2) Is there a difference in the mean scores (perceptions relative importance of the university supervisors' roles and responsibilities) of each items between student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors?

Method and Data Source

Subjects. The sample consisted of a total of 86 student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors who were involved in the Indian Teacher Education Program. The Cooperating Teacher (CT) sample consisted of 41 teachers who had been a cooperating teacher with an ITEP intern during the 1993-1994 academic year.

The Student Teacher (ST) sample consisted of 29 ITEP student teachers, each of whom had completed their 16-week field experiences during the 1993-1994 academic year. Twelve student teachers had relocated without forwarding addresses; this accounts for the inequity between the CT and ST sample sizes.

The University Supervisor (US) sample consisted of 16 non-Aboriginal individuals who had supervised ITEP student teachers during the 1993-1994 academic year. Five of the 16 supervisors were members of the university faculty; the remaining were non-faculty appointments.

Design of the Survey Instrument. The *Role of the University Supervisor Survey* (Lamont & Arcand, 1994) was a revised form of two previous surveys: the ASU *University Supervisor Functions Survey* developed by Enz, Freeman and Wallin (1992), and a similar form developed by Enz, Freeman and McCammon (1994). The function of the survey was to assess the perceptions of each participant with regards to the relative importance of selected roles and responsibilities of the university supervisor. The 14 roles and responsibilities represented in the original instrument were derived from reviews of student teacher handbooks, a comprehensive review of related literature, and formal interviews of successful university supervisors. Minor modifications in wording were made by the authors in constructing the *Role of the University Supervisor Survey* to ensure that the intent of the items were preserved (e.g., in our program, student teachers in the extended practicum are referred to as interns).

Surveys were mailed with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to student teachers, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers. Each individual was asked to complete the 14 item *Role of the University Supervisor Survey*. The survey considered 14 specific role functions the university supervisor might be expected to fulfill. Participants were directed to respond to the survey by using a weighted rank procedure. They were to allocate a total of 100 points among the 14 functions cited in the survey. The number of points assigned to each item was to reflect their perception of the relative importance of the role or responsibility described.

Completion of the survey was voluntary, and participants were assured that their anonymity was guaranteed. In accordance with this, surveys were not coded for identification.

The initial survey return rate was 17% for the student teachers (ST), 34% for cooperating teachers (CT), and 56% for university supervisors (US). A follow-up letter increased the response rates to 24% (ST), 71% (CT), and 88%(US). A second follow-up letter increased the rate to 34% (ST), 85% (CT), and 88%(US). A phone call follow-up to each participant resulted in return rates of 76% (ST), 93% (CT), and 88%(US).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine differences in means of the three groups (cooperating teacher, student teacher, and university supervisor) for each of the 14 items on the survey. The data were then inspected with post hoc multiple-comparison procedures using Scheffe's method. Scheffe's procedure was chosen because it is the most conservative test among all post hoc comparisons and can be used with sample populations of different sizes . "The critical value in Scheffe's method is chosen in such a way that the probability of the false rejection of the null hypothesis (Type I error) for all comparisons made jointly does not exceed a chosen significance level, no matter how many comparisons are made. This leads to an extremely

conservative test for each comparison performed" (Ferguson & Takane, 1989, p. 334). According to Stevens (1990), this procedure is so conservative that for more adequate power, the level of significance should be set at .10 or .15. Therefore, in this investigation, the data was examined with a significance level fixed at .10.

Results

The data in Table 1 illustrate the relative levels of importance which each group (cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and student teachers) attributed to each of the 14 specific functions cited in the survey. The 14 functions are listed in rank order of means from the function ranked as most important (rank of 1) to that which ranked as least important (rank of 14) by members of each of the three groups.

Insert Table 1 about here

Results of the Scheffe procedure as presented in Table 2 indicated that a significant difference in means between the perceptions of cooperating teachers and student teachers existed for Item B. There were no significant differences between the perceptions of cooperating teachers, university supervisors, or student teachers for any of the remaining items.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

The results of this investigation indicate that university supervisors, student teachers, and cooperating teachers hold similar perceptions of the university supervisor's role. Comparisons conducted in the post hoc analysis revealed a single significant difference to exist between perceptions of student teachers and cooperating teachers. Student teachers placed a lower

level of priority than cooperating teachers on the role of the university supervisor to perform formative assessment procedures (ie. regular observation and feedback conferences). With regards to summative assessment procedures, however, inspection of the data in Table 2 suggests that student teachers place greater importance than cooperating teachers and supervisors on the role of the university supervisor to assist in the composition of the final evaluation document. It may be that student teachers have misconceptions about the types and degrees of influence that university supervisors have at the stage of final evaluation. Alternatively, this finding may reflect student teacher desire for greater college involvement and support in ensuring their successful completion of the practicum. In effect, the supervisor is still relied upon as the "watchdog" for the final completion of university requirements during student teaching, but is not necessarily valued in their ability to provide useful formative feedback throughout field experiences (Zimpher, deVoss & Nott, 1980).

Each of the three groups (ST, CT, and US) chose different items to rank as the most important role of the university supervisor. Student teachers felt that most importantly, the university supervisor should provide them with moral support and encouragement. Cooperating teachers ranked the assessment of student teacher skills through observation and feedback conferences as the primary role, and university supervisors felt that the most important function they served was to facilitate the communication of student teacher progress through regular feedback conferences with the triad. Overall, when the scores were combined across the three groups, the role of communicating student teacher progress through triad conferences was held as the primary function of the university supervisor. Since the facilitator/communicator role of university supervisors holds such great importance by all members of the triad, it is essential that university supervisors be actively involved in defining, communicating, clarifying, and

reviewing the roles and expectations of triad members throughout the student teaching experience.

Comparitive Findings

Despite the programmatic, cultural and geographical differences which exist between this study and the investigation conducted in Arizona by Enz, Freeman, and Wallin (1994) two studies showed interesting similarities. Triad members in both studies agreed on the three most important roles of the university supervisor: a) to facilitate feedback conferences between triad members, b) observe and provide feedback to the student teacher, c) provide moral support and encouragement to the student teacher, and d) to review timelines, requirements, and responsibilities of the student teacher. While the rank order of these three items between studies were not identical, the similarities nevertheless suggest that the roles/functions of the university supervisor are generally established.

There were a greater number of discrepant findings between our investigation and the study carried out in Tennessee by Enz, Freeman and McCammon (1994). However, the one notable similarity was that the student teacher samples in both studies concurred that the provision of moral support and encouragement to the student teacher was the primary function of the supervisor. This finding may be associated with the fact both of these studies were administered *after* student teaching had been completed (the survey conducted in Arizona was given *prior* to student teaching). While speculative, it may be that during the practicum, student teachers find themselves needing a greater balance between the exchange of 1) professional/evaluative feedback and 2) feedback which is viewed as personal/emotional support. As the practicum progresses, the role of the cooperating teacher becomes increasingly focused on the provision of evaluative comments in preparation and anticipation of composing the final evaluation document. Perhaps the growing imbalance between evaluative

versus supportive comments by the cooperating teacher contributes to an increased need for personal/emotional support--which the student teacher subsequently seeks to obtain from the university supervisor.

Relative to the studies conducted by Enz, Freeman and Wallin (1994) and Enz, Freeman and McCammon (1994), triad members working within the context of the ITEP program have a much higher level of consensus in their perceptions of the role of the university supervisor. In our study, matches in perceptions between groups were overwhelmingly predominant over mismatches on specific survey items. While in the Arizona and Tennessee studies, up to fifteen significant differences in mean responses between triad members existed, our study revealed only one significant difference between paired groups. This suggests that ITEP triad members have communicated their perceptions of the role of the university supervisor to a greater extent than student teaching triads in other contexts. While the related literature has suggested that similarity between triad members' perceptions is desirable, our findings cannot contribute to such conclusions without further investigation.

While speculative, methodological differences, particularly those used in data collection, may have contributed to the high level of consensus in the ITEP triads. In the study conducted by Enz, Freeman and Wallin (1994), participants were required to complete the survey at orientation seminars held *prior* to student teaching. In our study, surveys were mailed to participants *after* student teaching had been completed. Thus, the previous study may have reflected a higher degree of student teacher *expectations*; our study reflected the perceptions of triad members based on their completed *experiences*. Likely, the sixteen week extended practicum provided the time required for triad members to communicate, clarify, and reach a higher level of consensus about role expectations of the university supervisor.

The high level of triad consensus may also be related to the existence of a strong internal student support structure within ITEP. The Indian Teacher Education Program prepares its students academically in a program which has a core of courses tailored to meeting specific needs of Aboriginal students. Furthermore, the academic component is supplemented by and enhanced with a strong counseling unit. A personal counsellor is assigned to each ITEP student when they enter the program; this counselor supports and monitors the personal and academic progress of students throughout their preservice training. During student teaching, the counsellor refrains from assuming the supervisory role, rather serves as a liaison whose primary function is to provide continued support to the student teacher. When necessary, the ITEP liaison performs the critical role of mediator, particularly when it involves the communication of sensitive issues which may be the source misunderstanding between the student teacher and the university supervisor. The most predominant reason for this type of mediation is when personal problems such as health, family issues, or interpersonal difficulties within the triad interfere with the student teacher's performance. The rapport and a trusting relationship which develops between the student teacher and ITEP liaison throughout the academic years prior to student teaching is often useful during the practicum. In effect, it enables students to feel comfortable with confiding in and seeking support and personal advice from an individual who is not directly involved in evaluating their success in the practicum.

This study clearly suggests that shared perceptions about the role of the university supervisor exist among triad members within multicultural supervision contexts. Contrary to the literature which cites a prevalence of role ambiguity in student teaching, our findings indicate that commonalties in the university supervisor's role persists even across cultural, geographical and ideological borders. Conflicts arising between triad members then, may not stem from role ambiguity or from the multicultural supervision context. Rather, factors such as supervisory

style, personality of the supervisor, communication skills, philosophical differences, knowledge of the research base in teaching and supervision, and personal teaching experiences may influence triad interactions more than researchers have previously thought. Deeper exploration of the cognitions influencing the behaviors, attitudes, and enactment of specific goals and roles by university supervisors (Guyton and McIntyre,1990) through qualitative research techniques is therefore recommended for further study. Participant observation, interviewing of triad members, and collection of written communications (observation notes and evaluation forms) could add other dimensions to examining the role of the university supervisor in relation to student teacher success. Exclusion of such methods could lead to the generation of false assumptions about impact of role clarity and multicultural counselling on the student teaching triad. Research on cross-cultural supervision in the preservice setting is difficult to conduct, particularly because the degree to which an individual is classified as being associated with a particular "culture" is so difficult to define and measure. At times, aspects of cultural identity are difficult to distinguish from those of racial identity. The Indian Teacher Education Program does not seek particular supervision techniques in which our supervisors would be trained in the "best techniques" to use with Aboriginal students. However, identification of those areas where discrepancies such as miscommunications, misunderstandings, and mistaken roles/goals exist is critical. Only then can we begin to make alterations towards the improvement of preservice education, not only for the benefit of student teachers, but for the continuing education of cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

Table 1

Perceptions of the Relative Importance of University Supervisor Functions

Role/Function	Rank Order of Importance* Univ. Sups. (n=14)	Coop. Tchrs. (n=38)	Stud. Tchrs. (n=22)	Overall Rank
A. Facilitate communication of ST progress through regular feedback conferences with the triad.	1	2	2	1
B. Assess quality of ST skills through regular observation and feedback conferences.	4	1	5	2
C. Provide moral support and encouragement to the ST.	2	4	1	3
D. Review timelines and progress regarding requirements and responsibilities of the ST.	9	3	3	4
E. Conduct instructional seminars to enhance the student teaching experience.	6	5	4	5
F. Provide collegial support and encouragement to the CT.	3	7	6	6
G. Mediate personality conflicts between student teacher and cooperating teacher.	5	6	8	7
H. Assist CT in composing final evaluation document	12	10	7	8
I. Initiate support to ST concerns regarding CT's instructional style and philosophies.	7	11	9	9
J. Mediate differences in instructional styles and/or philosophy between CT and ST.	8	8	12	10
K. Assist CT in improving/refining their own observation and supervision skills.	10	9	10	11
L. Provide a direct link between the school, college of education and the university.	11	12	11	12
M. Provide research-based information about education, teaching, and learning.	13	13	13	13
N. Videotape the intern to enhance self-analysis and provision of feedback.	14	14	14	14

*Listed in order of decreasing importance, with 1 being the most important.

Table 2
Contrasts in Perceptions of the Relative Importance of University Supervisors' Roles and Functions Among Student Teachers, Cooperating Teachers and University Supervisors

Role/Function	Means US	Means CT	Means ST	ANOVA F	ANOVA p
A. Facilitate communication of ST progress through regular feedback conferences with the triad.	13.29	14.11	12.09	0.41	0.66
B. Assess quality of ST skills through regular observation and feedback conferences.	9.57	14.19*	8.95*	3.51	0.04
C. Provide moral support and encouragement to the ST.	10.86	9.75	15.54	2.36	0.10
D. Review timelines and progress regarding requirements and responsibilities of the ST.	6.29	10.18	10.36	1.33	0.27
E. Conduct instructional seminars to enhance the student teaching experience.	8.00	9.11	9.52	0.15	0.86
F. Provide collegial support and encouragement to the CT.	9.64	7.09	7.28	1.37	0.26
G. Mediate personality conflicts between student teacher and cooperating teacher.	8.38	7.31	6.61	0.65	0.52
H. Assist CT in composing final evaluation document	5.31	5.91	6.99	0.55	0.58
I. Initiate support to ST concerns regarding CT's instructional style and philosophies.	6.85	5.73	6.24	0.42	0.66
J. Mediate differences in instructional styles and/or philosophy between CT and ST.	6.54	6.42	4.97	0.85	0.43
K. Assist CT in improving/refining their own observation and supervision skills.	5.85	6.09	5.73	0.05	0.95
L. Provide a direct link between the school, college of education and the university.	5.38	4.79	5.11	0.11	0.90
M. Provide research-based information about education, teaching, and learning.	4.38	3.34	4.18	0.45	0.64
N. Videotape the intern to enhance self-analysis and provision of feedback.	2.92	2.25	3.57	0.86	0.43

* significant at $p < .10$

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